

CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: Tuesday, 14 December 2021

Title: Active Travel Update

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk - Adam Clapton

Background

The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on several current schemes under way which aim to improve active travel routes across Witney. Discussions have already taken place within the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee on several of these initiatives.

The Town Council's Active Travel Infrastructure Plan 2020 is attached for information and to evaluate progress on the aspirations included therein.

Current Situation

20mph Speed Restrictions

Included as a separate agenda item to this committee.

Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)

Members will be aware that Oxfordshire County Council is taking the lead on a plan for Witney with the input of local groups and organisations. Officers and Members of the Town Council are attending the meetings. The purpose and remit of the LCWIP (as set by OCC) is as follows:

1. *The Witney LCWIP Steering Group ("the Group") is a partnership for holding discussions about walking and cycling in Witney and the development of the LCWIP. It is focussed on production of the Witney LCWIP by (a) community organisations focused on active travel and (b) officers at OCC responsible for active travel and local transport strategy.*
2. *The remit of the Group is to:*
 - a. *Work with OCC officers with the tasks and stages of developing the Witney LCWIP, including reviewing completed tasks and provide refinement where necessary throughout the development of the LCWIP*
 - b. *Provide local and/or specialist knowledge in the development of the Witney LCWIP*
 - c. *Consider, and represent, the needs of all walking and cycling users in development of the Witney LCWIP*
3. *The main objective of the Group is to advance the production of the Witney LCWIP in a swift and coherent way to help OCC meet its climate action, transport, environmental, health and economic objectives and ensure the walking and cycling needs of Witney residents and visitors both now and in the future are met.*

The geographical scope and minutes of the first two meetings of the LCWIP are attached for information.

Community Speed watch

This initiative is currently with the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee and a task and finish group has been established to investigate its introduction and operation. The task and finish group consists of Cllr Andrew Coles (Chair of TAC), Cllr Joy Aitman, Cllr Ted Fenton, Cllr Mark Johnson and Chris Hulme (TVP) but a meeting has not yet taken place.

Several pilot areas for the scheme have been identified by Witney TAC and these would likely need to be extended due to the Town Council's decision to work with the County Council on introducing 20mph speed restrictions.

There is no Town Council funding towards equipment for the scheme, but Witney County Councillors have indicated there is scope for this from their Priority Funds.

School Streets

At the September meeting of Witney TAC residents of Church Green presented suggestions on how to improve pedestrian and cycle safety in the vicinity. County Council Officers have agreed to consider them ahead of the next meeting in January to see if they could be incorporated into the emerging LCWIP.

In addition, there were discussions on how this could interact with the wider areas of Corn Street and Market Place, but no resolution was made. This also ties in with the Town Council's response to the High Street Consultation prohibiting motor vehicles.

Safer Streets

At the Full Council meeting on 6th December the TVP representative advised funds had been secured for this scheme which would be put towards additional CCTV cameras in problematic areas of the town.

High Street/Market Square – Prohibition of Motor Vehicles

The Town Council considered this consultation at the meeting of 6th December and the response can be seen below:

Witney Town Council support the permanent prohibition of motor vehicles covering High Street and Market Square with the following exemptions: buses, taxis, vehicles loading/unloading and those displaying a valid blue badge. However, it would like to see its potential introduction managed better which includes effective and intuitive communications around the scheme, simple road markings and signage. It would ask that loading and unloading is made as easy as possible and that all ideas to help traders along this stretch are considered. The safety and air quality around the junction of Church Green, Corn Street & Market Square (including the area adjacent to the war memorial) needs to be considered as a priority– the conflict of all road users and pedestrians should be paramount, as listed in the Statement of Reasons, and the current barrier of planters does not conform with that outcome – signage and a change of road colouring may be more beneficial when entering the High Street.

The Town Council does not support the changing of existing 30-minute parking bays to 3 hour disabled parking places, as the proposals stand. This area is not currently suitable for disabled parking as they are against a wall and further thought needs to be given as to whether the spaces could be larger, have hatching all around or be slanted for ease of access.

As part of a wider aspiration, the Town Council would like to see a larger town centre development plan coming forward and requests that Market Square is made easier to close off for community use by the County Council.

A40 Corridor

Members have been sent the link concerning the County Council Planning Application for the corridor in early December which includes new bus lanes. Members should consider this in relation to any new active travel initiatives in Witney. Further details can be found here [A40 improvements | Oxfordshire County Council](#) Responses should be sent to A40corridor@Oxfordshire.gov.uk

Witney Oxford Transport Group

The group presented their proposals for a railway between Carterton and Oxford to Witney Town Council on 29th November 2021.

The group believes this would provide an environmentally friendly, fast, reliable alternative to cars currently using the A40, which would result in residents walking to local stations. Considerations have also been given to biodiversity and potentially reducing the carbon footprint over time.

The scheme has been costed and the group is currently seeking Councils' support for 2 aspects of the scheme. The first is a feasibility study which they are in discussion with the County Council on and the second is investigation on a Land Value Capture Project. The hopes are that this project would provide funding for the project. There are hopes a station could be built south of the A40 and be tied in with housing there. However, this area is not designated as a strategic housing development in the District Council's Local Plan, so officers advised further discussion was needed at that level.

Environmental impact

There are no direct impacts to the Town Council as these schemes are being introduced through other authorities/organisations. The wider positive impact on Witney if the schemes are successfully incorporated are great.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Consider progress in achieving its aims in the Active Travel Infrastructure Plan 2020.